DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 319 477 PS 018 543

AUTHOR Tavis, Timothy M.
TITLE Ethical Perspectives on the Current Controversy Regarding Openness in Adoption.
PUB DATE Aug 89
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (New Orleans, LA, August 11-15, 1989).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adoption; *Civil Liberties; Community Influence; Conflict Resolution; *Ethics; *Individualism; Placement; *Social Change; Social Influences
IDENTIFIERS Conceptual Analysis; Open Adoption; *Social Justice; Social Policy; *Utilitarianism

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines current changes in American adoption practice and the controversies surrounding these changes. It includes a discussion of the role that neo-Kantian and utilitarian perspectives have played in American adoption policy and practice, and offers an alternative, the communitarian perspective, described by Sandel (1984). Adoption practice in the United States is moving from the confidential mode, which has been dominant through much of the 20th century, to increasing degrees of openness and contact among the members of the adoption triangle. Several factors contribute to the current trend toward increased openness in American adoptions, and definitions of open placement differ. Most of the research on openness is anecdotal, and reports often seem inconclusive and incomplete. Sandel sees the dominent contemporary positions on social policy as variations on the two ethical views of utilitarianism and a neo-Kantian assertion of inherent individual rights. The utilitarian approach to conflict situations weighs the desires of involved parties and the relative costs and benefits for each of available courses of action. The neo-Kantian approach in such situations involves adjudication among parties on the basis of the inherent rights of each party. However, both the utilitarian and neo-Kantian approaches are insufficient, because both are inherently individualistic, while the dilemmas of adoption are relational. The alternative, the communitarian perspective on adoption exists, but generally goes unrecognized. Approximately 40 references are cited. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED319477

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CURRENT CONTROVERSY REGARDING OPENNESS IN ADOPTION

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Timothy M. Tavis

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Timothy M. Tavis
Texas A & M University

PS 018843

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

No accurate figures are available on the current number of adoptions in the United States, since there has not been standard mandatory reporting by the states since 1971. However, the National Committee for Adoption (1985) estimates that in 1982 there were nearly 150,000 adoptions in the U.S., of which about 1/3 were non-relative adoptions. Kadushin estimated in 1974 that at least 2% of the total child population of the United States, or at least 1.5 million children, were adopted. If we estimate two birthparents and two adoptive parents per adoptee, then the number of people directly affected by adoption increases by a factor of five to around 7.5 million people. While this estimate may be high, given cases of sibling adoption, single parent adoption, and unknowing birthfathers, it is clear that issues and concerns related to adoption have a direct effect on a significant portion of the American population.

Mental health professionals are becoming increasingly sensitive to adoption as a clinical issue. McRoy, Grotevant & Zurcher (1988) note in their recent book that 15 to 25% of the teenagers in residential treatment for psychological or behavioral problems are adopted. This is startling when we remember that only about 2% of the children in the general population are adopted. It becomes more disturbing when we discover that in general the children referred for treatment were not late placements whose earliest years may have been characterized by instability or abuse. Rather, usually they were adopted as infants by childless couples. Pergamon Press has recently published a book by Winkler, Brown, van Keppel, and Blanchard (1988), devoted to adoption as a clinical issue. In the psychological journals, Kathlyn Marquis, Richard Detweiler (1985), and David Brodzinsky (1987a, 1987b; see also Brodzinsky, Schechter, Braff, & Singer, 1984) have been leading a debate over whether adopted necessarily means different, and whether different necessarily means worse adjustment.

In this paper, I will outline current changes in American adoption practice, and the controversies surrounding these changes. By examining the philosophical perspectives which come into play here, I hope to contribute to our understanding of current positions and suggest some new directions for exploration.

First, let me review some background. Adoption practice in the United States is moving from the confidential mode which has been dominant through much of the twentieth century to increasing degrees of openness and contact among the members

of the adoption triangle. In the confidential adoptions which were standard practice until recently, there was no contact or exchange of information between the adoptive family and the birthparents. All court records were sealed, and a new birth certificate was issued in the names of the adoptive parents. Sorich and Siebert (1982) report that the Child Saving Institute of Omaha, Nebraska arranged their first face-to-face meeting between adoptive and birthparents in 1977. No identifying information was exchanged at that meeting, but since 1977 the Institute has begun to offer options ranging from the exchange of pictures and non-identifying information to ongoing direct contact among the members of the adoption triad. The Children's Home Society of California (1984; hereafter CHSC) began arranging meetings between birthparents and adoptive parents in 1974. The Society reports that as of 1984, 10% of their adoptions involved some degree of openness, although less than 1% of the triads had exchanged last names, addresses, and phone numbers. Face-to-face meetings between adoptive and birthparents are also offered by Catholic Social Services of Green Bay, Wisconsin (Gilling & Rausch, 1979), and the regional offices of Lutheran Social Services in San Antonio and Corpus Christi, Texas (Lutheran Social Service of Texas, 1982), to name but a few. McRoy, Grotevant, and White (1988) list nine other agencies which offer some degree of openness in adoption arrangements, while Lindsay (1987) names several independent adoption services in California which offer open options. McArthur (in press) estimates that as much as 30% of current adoptions involve some degree of openness. While fully disclosed adoption is not yet commonplace, there is a definite trend toward increased openness in both agency and independent adoptions in the United States.

These changes in adoption practice are fueled in part by the growing controversy over closed adoption records, and in part by the pressures created by a decreasing number of healthy white infants available for adoption.

As I mentioned earlier, sealed adoption records have been the norm in the United States through most of the twentieth century. This norm has been due in large part to concerns regarding the stigmas of illegitimacy for the children and infertility for the adoptive parents, and consequent concern to protect the privacy of the parties involved. Additionally, emphasis on the integrity of the nuclear family (which may have been partly a response to the increasing isolation of the nuclear family unit in American society generally) led to a common belief in the importance of completely

severing the adoptee's ties with his/her family of origin so that s/he could be entirely incorporated into the new family. The first state law prohibiting public inspection of adoption records was enacted in Minnesota in 1917, but by 1950 most states had adopted similar laws sealing adoption records.

This practice has come under increasing fire in recent years. Adult adoptees, individually and in groups, are attempting to break what they see as an unacceptable barrier to their heritage. Their reasons for attempting to break the seal include desires to resolve confusion or a sense of emptiness, to further self-understanding, or to gain a sense of belonging which they may feel is missing due to either strained relations with the adoptive parents or the loss of an adoptive parent. Other motivations include desire for more extensive medical, ethnic, or religious history, and fear of inadvertently committing incest with an unrecognized biological relative. Politically active groups such as Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association (ALMA) argue that adoptees are entitled to all available information about their histories as a matter of right. Joanne Small (1979), founder of Adoptees in Search, argues that American adoptees are victims of discrimination because they are denied rights of access which are held by non-adoptees.

The policy changes made by Catholic Social Services of Green Bay, Wisconsin are an example of changes in adoption practice resulting from the birth records controversy. I have already alluded to this agency's sponsorship of meetings between birthparents and adoptive parents. In addition, adoptive parents are provided with birthparents' autobiographies, photos of the birthparents and their families, and the birthparents' first and last names. Catholic Social Services of Green Bay instituted these practices as a result of the agency's new belief that an adoptee has the right to full knowledge of his or her heritage, a belief which in turn resulted from the agency's experience with a large number of adult adoptees requesting information on their backgrounds and birthparents requesting information on the welfare of the child or children whom they had placed for adoption.

The second factor contributing to the current trend toward increased openness in American adoptions is a result of increased availability of birth control techniques, legalization of abortion, and increased acceptance of illegitimacy. These changes have led to a decrease in the number of healthy white infants available for adoption. This decrease in turn has led to increased agency responsiveness to the needs and desires

of birthparents, since birthparents must be induced to place their children for adoption. Baran, Pannor, and Sorosky (1976) report that many young women have chosen to keep their babies rather than place them in a closed adoption, feeling that such a placement would be tantamount to giving up their children and pretending that the children had died.[1] Barth (1987) reports that the majority of the adolescent mothers he interviewed had not considered adoption, largely because of the uncertainty about their children's future which they saw as a consequence of closed adoption. Adoption options which incorporate some degree of openness may be seen as responding to these birthparents' concerns, thus increasing the likelihood of placement.

Another effect of the decreased supply of adoptable healthy white infants has been an increased interest in placing older children for adoption. Borgman (1982) and Jewett (1978) address the argument that it is inappropriate to expect children above school age to cut off significant relationships which predate the adoption, including relationships with biological relatives. Thus, the increased incidence of older child adoptions leads to increased exposure to, and experience with, more open forms of adoption for agencies and, to some extent, independent adoption organizations.

We have seen that the trend toward increased openness in adoption is growing and spreading. However, so is the controversy over this trend. McRoy, Grotevant, and White (1988) identify two primary factors in this controversy:

> First, there is no consensus among adoption professionals as to what openness or open placement means. Secondly, the practice of open placements is relatively new and its impact on members of the adoptive triad -- birthparents, adoptive parents and adopted children -- has not been adequately addressed by research
>
> (p. 18)

On the first point, the Ad Hoc Committee to Reevaluate Adoptive Placement Philosophy proposed the following definition of open placement in a letter dated April 15, 1981 (Catholic Charities of America, 1983):

> Open placement recognizes that adoption is a lifelong process involving the adoptee, birthparents, and adoptive parents. Open placement affirms that an adoptee, although relinquished and a full member of his/her adoptive family, nevertheless remains connected to his/her birthfamily. Although legal and nurturing rights are transferred from birthparents to adoptive

[1] In fact, birthmothers used to be advised to do just that. The literature on birthmother grieving is fascinating, but unfortunately too tangential to the current discussion to review here. But see, for example, Rynearson (1982), Deykin, Campbell, and Patti (1984), or Kraft, Palombo, Woods, Mitchell, and Schmidt (1985).

> parents, both sets of parents recognize the importance of keeping open channels of communication to share valuable information during the child's minority years. Placement agencies accept the responsibility to educate and counsel both birthparents and adoptive parents for a fuller understanding of adoption as a unique institution to which both sets of parents have mutual concerns and obligations. In Open Placement, agencies will expand their services to respond sensitively to the evolving needs of all three parties to adoption.

This definition encompasses a wide range of possibilities, ranging from non-identifying meetings between adoptive and birthparents at time of placement, through ongoing non-identifying communication through the agency as intermediary, to direct, ongoing, personal contact between birthparents and adoptive family. Children's Home Society of California offers a range of possibilities which spans most of this continuum. Diane Yost of Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois also defines openness as spanning a range from "openness to hearing history about the biological family all the way through to completely open arrangements in which both families meet and have access to one another in some way throughout the years" (CHSC, 1984). On the other hand, Ruby Lee Piester of the Edna Gladney Maternity Home (CHSC, 1984) offers a more conservative definition of openness as sharing with the child why a mother would place the child for adoption. This variety of concepts and practices under one heading makes for considerable confusion in discussing the merits and risks of current adoption trends. The comments of Carole Anderson (CHSC, 1984), the incoming president of Concerned United Birthparents, Inc., may be helpful here. She states that "adoption without full exchange of information can only be called semi-open." This points to a useful distinction between three broad categories: closed or confidential adoption, involving no contact and little or no exchange of information; semi-open adoption, involving limited contact and no identifying information; and open or fully disclosed adoption, involving exchange of identifying information and ongoing contact among the parties. The pressures, tasks, and opportunities facing the members of an adoption triad and the agency involved will be very different for each of these three categories.

McRoy, Grotevant, and White's (1988) second point, regarding the lack of research into the effects of various degrees of openness on the members of the adoption triad, is an important one. In fact, most of the literature on openness in adoption might be called anecdotal, in the sense that it is primarily the more or less

reasoned expression of opinion based on personal or professional experience. Examples of this literature would include Flynn's article, "A Parent's Perspective" (1979) (the personal statement of an adoptive mother) and Foster's article, "Who has the 'right' to know?" (1979) (a professional speaking from his own experience base). Others, such as Zeilinger (1979) have addressed the legal and ethical issues involved, while Curtis (1986) and Dukette (1984) have considered the influence of agency and caseworker values on positions taken and policies instituted. Numerous professionals in the field of adoption have expressed strong feelings on both sides of the issue, and various political groups such as ALMA and Concerned United Birthparents, Inc. have voiced their feelings powerfully. However, little formal theorizing or empirical research has been produced. Kraft, Palombo, Woods, Mitchell and Schmidt (1985a, 1985b) and Kraft, Palombo, Mitchell, Woods, Schmidt, and Tucker (1985) may be the only formal theoretical explorations of the psychological issues related to varying degrees of openness in adoption, and these are rather limited in theoretical perspective, being predominantly psychoanalytic. Belbas (1987) and McRoy, Grotevant, and White (1988) appear to be the only empirical studies currently available, and both of these were intended to be exploratory studies. However, McRoy and Grotevant are currently engaged in a three-year national study of openness in adoption which grows out of their previous work. They have developed a complex model of adoptive family development, and are exploring a number of theoretical perspectives in their work. Additionally, some adoption agencies such as the Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois are developing their own studies in this area.

Another feature of the literature on openness in adoption is striking upon review, and is the primary focus of this paper. These discussions are typically framed in terms of the competing rights of the parties or of cost-benefit analysis. Examples of the former might be the statements of organized adoption interest groups such as ALMA and Adoptees in Search; Baran, Pannor, and Sorosky's (1976) arguments for open adoption as standard policy; or discussions such as Campbell's (1979) article on the birthparent's right to know. The 1981 report of the Children's Home Society of Minnesota on its Openness in Adoption Pilot Project (cited in McRoy, Grotevant, and White, 1988), which attempts to evaluate increased openness in terms of the values and risks to each of the parties in the adoption triad, is an example of the latter.

At first it seems quite appropriate that attempts to work out such complex and potentially painful issues as those involved in adoption should rely on these tools of analysis. But such discussions often seem inconclusive and incomplete, as if they somehow fail to capture something vital but hard to identify. In an attempt to understand what these approaches may be missing, let us look more closely at the approaches themselves.

Michael Sandel (1984), in a short but illuminating article on political philosophy, suggests that the dominant contemporary positions on social policy can be seen as variations on two ethical views: utilitarianism and a neo-Kantian assertion of inherent individual rights. The utilitarian relies on the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number, and attempts to maximize the general welfare. The neo-Kantian relies on the principle stated by John Rawls in his book, A Theory of Justice (1971):

> Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. . . . The rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interest.

Thus, the utilitarian approach to situations of conflict or controversy is to weigh the desires of the parties, and the relative costs and benefits for each party of the available courses of action. The neo-Kantian approach in such situations is to attempt to adjudicate among the parties on the basis of the inherent rights of each. The Children's Home Society of Minnesota's report on their openness pilot project (cited in McRoy, Grotevant, and White, 1988) has a strong utilitarian flavor, while assertions of the right to know (on the part of adoptees and birthparents) or the right to privacy (on the part of birthparents and adoptive parents) seem grounded in a neo-Kantian perspective.

If Sandel (1984) is right, we can easily understand why these approaches would be brought to bear on the difficult and often painful issues surrounding adoption. Kaplan (1987) argues that adoption is a "fundamental, life altering event" which confronts each member of the adoption triad with seven core psychological issues: loss; separation; intimacy and rejection; shame and guilt; grief; identity confusion; and mastery and control. As adoption professionals and members of adoption triads attempt to impose conceptual order and make personal and policy decisions in this psychologically charged arena, it makes sense that we would use the categories with which we are most familiar. However, these approaches are insufficient precisely

because of the psychological intensity and complexity of adoption situations.

As McArthur (in press) and others have pointed out, "responses to adoption are not stereotypical for any member of the adoption triangle" (p. 136). Thoughts and feelings about the adoption vary between triad members, between triads, and over time. Brodzinsky, Singer, and Braff (1984) discuss changes in adoptees' understanding of adoption as they mature, and the literature on research and field experience in adoption offers ample evidence for widely different perspectives from different adoptive parents and different birthmothers. Common sense tells us that as the members of a triad enter new phases in their individual and family lives, new challenges and rewards will lead to new responses. McRoy, Grotevant and White (1988), reporting on their interviews with the members of seventeen adoptive triads, note that adoptive parents with fully disclosed adoptions expressed feelings ranging from "it's the right thing for all adoptive parents" to "I'm not so sure I would do this open thing again" (pp. 120-121, emphasis in original). Likewise, birthparent attitudes range from acceptance of limited contact and support of the adoptive parents' role (even, in one case, the birthmother's statement that she planned to rely on the adoptive mother for support when she started her own family) to deep frustration and perhaps regret over the situation: "If I legally could, I would take the adoptive mother to court;" "I feel like I'm her mom and I ought to be able to pick her up and take her with me any time I want to" (pp. 123-124). (In this study, the adoptees were all under six years of age, and thus it was difficult to interview them directly about their feelings.) If the emotions, attitudes, and desires of triad members vary so widely, how is it possible to weigh the costs and benefits in each specific, changing situation?

While triad members' perceptions of their own and each others' rights also vary, a more significant problem with a rights-based analysis of adoption has to do with the appropriateness of the notion of inherent rights as applied to these rather unique situations. It may be more useful to consider the rights of triad members as situationally based rather than as inherent in the individuals. McRoy, Grotevant and White's (1988) triad members expressed concern about such issues as the adoptive parents' right to raise and discipline the child as they saw fit, the birthmother's right to information about or access to the adoptee, and the adoptee's right to information about or access to the birthmother or other biological relatives. While there is some

precedent here in courts' decisions regarding custody in divorce cases, we may be able to resolve some of the issues raised in adoptions more readily by approaching them in terms of reconciling the deeply felt desires or needs of the people involved rather than attempting to establish the pre-existing rights of the parties and then prioritize them.

This last consideration leads us into the heart of the problem with attempts to analyze adoption dilemmas in utilitarian or neo-Kantian terms. As Sandel (1984), Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) and others have pointed out, these approaches are inherently individualistic, that is, they assume that the individual is the primary social unit, and that s/he enters into relationships with others which are characterized (ideally) as relationships between free individuals pursuing their own desires within the boundaries set by the utilitarian or neo-Kantian framework. When conflicts occur, they are to be worked out according to these tenets. But the dilemmas of adoption lie precisely in the relationships among the members of the triads, in the problematic ties which bind them together and which in some sense go to the heart of who they are as persons. The relationship between parent and child, whether adoptive or biological, has a formative effect on the members of that relationship. While the adoptive relationship may be freely entered into, it is a form of kinship (Kirk, 1981) which somehow binds the participants. As Bellah et al. (1985) have pointed out, it is difficult if not impossible to articulate profound commitments in the language of individualism. But what other language do we have?

Sandel (1984) describes a new - or renewed - alternative to these two dominant moral visions, which he calls communitarianism. Advocates of communitarianism recall Aristotle's argument for a commonality of purposes and ends, a vision of ourselves as participants in a common life which is oriented toward common notions of the Good or the proper goals and modes of life. Drawing on Alisdair MacIntyre's After Virtue(1981), Sandel argues that our identity is formed in part by the communities and relationships in which we participate; that who we are and what we want is inextricably linked to the purposes and ends of these communities and relationships:

> Open-ended though it may be, the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity - whether family or city, tribe or nation, party or cause. In the communitarian view,

> these stories make a moral difference, not only a psychological one. They situate us in the world and give our lives their moral peculiarity. (p. 17)

Sandel's communitarianism is allied with Bellah et al.'s (1985) notion of the Biblical and republican traditions which join with individualism in forming American culture, and which historically have modulated individualism's emphasis on the individual as a discrete, free, and self-defining social unit. Thus, we can get a sense of what this communitarian perspective would look like in political life if we recall the Biblical prescription (note that I do not say 'description') of proper social life as 'the people of God', that is, a community formed through the members' common commitment to something beyond themselves and their individual interests. Similarly, we get a sense of the spirit of the Republican tradition in American life in the old-fashioned definition of a professional as someone who holds a position of responsibility to the community.

What would this communitarian perspective look like if it were applied to adoption? I want to argue that this perspective is already active in contemporary theory and practice, but has gone generally unrecognized. Bellah and his colleagues argue that individualism is the primary language used by contemporary Americans in thinking or talking about relationships. But they also argue that our secondary languages of commitment and community, languages such as those of the Biblical and republican traditions, have fallen into disuse but have not died. Rather, these other perspectives continue to influence our identities and actions, although this influence is considerably lessened by the fact that our reflection on these other perspectives is usually couched in individualist terms.Similarly, we may find evidence of communitarian sensibilities, often expressed in quasi-individualist terms, in the statements of members of the adoption triad.

Belbas (1987) studied the relationships which developed between adoptive parents and birthparents in adoptions which were at least semi-open. She concludes that "from the adoptive parents' perspective, the connection which develops is one in which empathy prevails, regardless of how unprepared the adoptive parent felt for the experience and regardless of the kind of contact they have" (p. 196).

While McRoy and Grotevant's current interview study on openness in adoption is only partway through data collection, their subjects' responses are important in this

regard. A number of adoptive parents who have ongoing contact with their children's birthmothers say that the most satisfying aspect of their relationships with the birthmothers is the sense that all parties share a commitment to the welfare of the child. Also, a number of adoptive parents who chose either open or semi-open adoption cite empathy for the birthmother as an important factor in their decision. When asked for their opinion about the rights of the parties in adoption, several of these adoptive parents responded by emphasizing the responsibilities which bind them together or discussing their sense of relatedness as primary over considerations of rights. Some of the adoptive parents involved in open adoptions seemed to be groping for a language to capture their sense of the permanence or givenness of the birthmothers' role in their children's lives, at times leading to such apparent contradictions as "she is his mother but we are his parents." In discussing the results of their pilot study, McRoy, Grotevant and White (1988) note that "advocates of open adoptions... stress empathic understanding of birthparents.... Issues of trust and responsibility seem paramount in open adoptions" (pp. 95-6).

It is important to recognize that these adoptive and birthparents are often wrestling with these issues in situations which are both painful and frightening. Kaplan's (1987) seven core issues raised by adoption are daunting: loss; separation; intimacy and rejection; shame and guilt; grief; identity confusion; and mastery and control. D. S. McArthur (personal communication, August 2, 1989) states:

> Open and cooperative adoptions have a lot of psychological pain in them as well as empathy and sharing, especially for the adoptee. Issues that have been repressed, then rediscovered and worked through for many years by adoptees in closed adoptions, are surfacing much more rapidly for young adoptees in a cooperative situation.... There is no question about the fact that it is very difficult for adoptees to have the most important person in their life give them away, and then live the rest of life feeling like they belong to two families.

On the level of professional discussion, we might interpret the emphasis on the child as the primary client in adoption (e.g., Watson, 1979) and on the welfare of the child as the primary criterion for policy decisions (e.g., Dukette, 1984) as attempts to express a communitarian notion of the common good in the neo-Kantian language of rights. The work on cooperative adoption being done by Sharon Kaplan and her associates at Parenting Resources, Inc. in southern California may be an example of agency involvement from a communitarian perspective. This agency offers counseling and education resources for all members of the adoption triad, and supports open

adoptions in which all parties work cooperatively to resolve the many issues which such adoptions raise. McArthur (in press) notes that in successful cooperative adoptions "this extended family is formed primarily to meet the needs of the adoptee, although other members of the adoption triangle also benefit" (p. 141).

We find a striking example of a communitarian sensibility in Stone's research on special needs adoptions (cited in Saracen, 1986). As Saracen (1986) reports, Stone interviewed parents who had adopted seriously handicapped children. He found that

> in a surprising number of these adoptions one of the motivating considerations was the parents' religious attitude: They felt they were obligated to discharge a divine mission, that they 'owed' it to these afflicted children to provide them with a normal family existence. There was no sense of guilt, but rather the sense that they were adding to the meaning of the lives of everyone. The afflicted child was 'ours' and implied in that was an interconnectedness among them, the child, their society, and divine purpose. Parenthetically, Stone had to conclude that these families were managing their situations in surprisingly adaptive, stable, and inspiring ways.
>
> (pp. 902-903)

Stone's work brings us to the end of these reflections on communitarianism in adoption. My intention has been, not to criticize the neo-Kantian and utilitarian perspectives, but to critique them. That is, I have attempted to understand the role that these perspectives play in American adoption policy and practice, and to offer an alternative perspective which, when added to the previous two, may enrich our discussions of this important topic. The ideas presented in this paper are certainly not conclusive, but I hope that they are suggestive and warrant further attention.

Works Cited

Baran, A., Pannor, R., & Sorosky, A. D. (1976). Open adoption. Social Work, 21, 97-100.

Barth, R. (1987). Adolescent mothers' beliefs about open adoption. Social Casework, 68, 323-331.

Belbas, N. (1987). Staying in touch: Empathy in open adoptions. Smith College Studies in Social Work, 57, 184-198.

Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985). Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life. New York: Harper & Row.

Borgman, R. (1982). The consequences of open and closed adoptions for older children. Child Welfare, 61, 217-226.

Brodzinsky, D. M. (1987a). Looking at adoption through rose-colored glasses: A critique of Marquis and Detweiler's "Does adoption mean different? An attributional analysis." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52, 394-398.

Brodzinsky, D. M. (1987b). Adjustment to adoption: A psychosocial perspective. Clinical Psychology Review, 7, 25-47.

Brodzinsky, D. M., Schechter, D. E., Braff, A. M., & Singer, L. M. (1984). Psychological and academic adjustment in adopted children. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 52, 582-590.

Campbell, L. H. (1979). The birthparent's right to know. Public Welfare, 37, 22-27.

Catholic Charities of America. (1983). Ad hoc committee to reevaluate adoption placement philosophy. Author.

Children's Home Society of California. (1984). The changing picture of adoption. Los Angeles: Author.

Children's Home Society of Minnesota. (1981). Openness in adoption pilot project. Unpublished manuscript.

Deykin, R. Y., Campbell, L., & Patti, P. (1984). The postadoption experience of surrendering parents. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 54, 270-280.

Dukette, R. (1984). Value issues in present-day adoption. Child Welfare, 63, 233-243.

Flynn, L. (1979). A parent's perspective. Public Welfare, 37, 28-33.

Foster, A. (1979). Who has the 'right' to know? Public Welfare, 37, 53-61.

Gilling, M., & Rausch, P. (1974). Paper presented at a national conference of Catholic Charities, June.

Jewett, C. (1978). Adopting the older child. Harvard: Harvard Common Press.

Kadushin, A. (1974). Child welfare services. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc.

Kaplan, S. (1987). A retrospective look at adoption in America. Screening for successful adoptions. Paper presented at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association, New York City, New York.

Kirk, H. D. (1981). Adoptive kinship: A modern institution in need of reforms. Toronto: Butterworth Co.

Kraft, A. D., Palombo, J., Woods, P. K., Mitchell, D., & Schmidt, A. W. (1985). Some theoretical considerations on confidential adoption, part I: The birth mother. Human Sciences Press, 13-21.

Kraft, A. D., Palombo, J., Woods, P. K., Mitchell, D., & Schmidt, A. W. (1985). Some theoretical considerations on confidential adoption, part II: The adoptive parent. Human Sciences Press, 69-81.

Kraft, A. D., Palombo, J., Mitchell, D., Woods, P. K., Schmidt, A. W., & Tucker, N. G. (1985). Some theoretical considerations on confidential adoption, part III: The adopted child. Human Sciences Press.

Lindsay, J. W. (1987). Open adoption: A caring option. Buena Park, CA: Morning Glory Press.

Lutheran Social Services of Texas, Inc. (1982). Open adoption statement. San Antonio, TX: Author, July.

MacIntyre, A. (1981). After virtue. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Marquis, K. S. & Detweiler, R. A. (1985). Does adopted mean different? An attributional analysis. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48, 1054-1066.

McArthur, D. S. (in press). Contemporary adoption: A cooperative enterprise. In Offerman & Buckerberg (Eds.), Gender in transition: A new frontier (pp. 133-149). New York: Plenum Press.

McRoy, R. G., Grotevant, H. D., & White, K. L. (1988). Openness in adoption: New practices, new issues. New York: Praeger.

McRoy, R. G., Grotevant, H. D., & Zurcher, L. A., Jr. (1988). Emotional disturbance in adopted adolescents: Origins and development. New York: Praeger.

National Committee for Adoption. (1985). Adoption factbook: United States data, issues, regulations and resources. Washington, D. C.: National Committee for Adoption Inc.

Rawls, J. (1971). A theory of justice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rynearson, E. K. (1982). Relinquishment and its maternal complications: A preliminary study. American Journal of Psychiatry, 139, 338-340.

Sandel, M. J. (1984). Morality and the liberal ideal. The New Republic, 191, 15-17.

Saracen, S. B. (1986). And what is the public interest? American Psychologist, 41, 899-905.

Small, J. W. (1979). Discrimination against the adoptee. Public Welfare, 37, 38-43.

Sorich, C., & Siebert, R. (1982). Toward humanizing adoption. Child Welfare, 61, 207-216.

Stone, E. (1982). The adoption of handicapped children: An exploratory study. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Watson, K. W. (1979). Who is the primary client? Public Welfare, 37, 11-14.

Winkler, R. C., Brown, D. W., van Keppel, M., Blanchard, A. (1988). Clinical practice in adoption. Elmsford, New York: Pergamon Press, Inc.

Zeilinger, R. (1979). The need versus the right to know. Public Welfare, 37, 44-48.